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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON TACTICAL
AIR & LAND FORCES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS

HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE
ON THE STRATEGIC
COMPETITION BETWEEN
THE UNITED STATES AND
THE CHINESE COMMUNIST
PARTY

March 24, 2023

Kevin S. Corbett
President & CEO
New Jersey Transit
1 Penn Plaza East
Newark, NJ 07105

Dear President Corbett,

I represent thousands of New Jerseyans who rely on affordable, reliable public transportation to commute to work every day, which is why I appreciate New Jersey Transit's efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic to maintain commuter routes and access. However, I write to express my concerns about the availability of many of these commuting options for working families as we move out of the pandemic, particularly given the recent announcement by DeCamp Bus Lines that it will be cutting its commuter bus service. I strongly urge New Jersey Transit to use all of the tools at its disposal to ensure that commuters can still access reliable service from North Jersey to Manhattan and to protect the good-paying union jobs that are now imperiled by route closures.

During the pandemic, commuter bus and rail lines were hit exceptionally hard as millions of Americans stopped going into the office. This was especially true in North Jersey, where hundreds of thousands of workers rely on commuter trains and buses to get to their jobs in New York City every day. Even as public health conditions have improved, these companies continue to deal with ridership that is below pre-pandemic levels due to workers continuing to work from home. This slow return to normalcy has greatly impacted the ability of bus and rail operators to stay in business, and is now causing many operators to consider permanently shuttering critical commuter routes or reducing their frequency of operation. However, there are tens of thousands of commuters per month that still rely on this critical service. The loss of access to these forms of transportation will cause longer commute times and financial strain as commuters are facing New York's congestion pricing, a tax that only punishes New Jerseyans and does nothing to stimulate our economy. Furthermore, a lack of public transportation will put more cars onto our roads and highways, worsening emissions and making it difficult to meet our state's climate goals.

DeCamp Bus Lines—which has operated for 153 years—announced this week that it would cut its commuter bus service due to decreased ridership. Not only has this left riders in search of options to make their way from North Jersey to Manhattan, it has put into jeopardy the good union jobs that the commuter service supports. As you know, reliable access to transit is crucial for economic dynamism and competitiveness, and I am concerned that major gaps in New Jersey’s transportation network will emerge in the absence of immediate action.

In recognition of the importance of maintaining access to bus and rail commuter routes during the pandemic, Congress—with large bipartisan majorities—created the Coronavirus Economic Relief for Transportation Services (CERTS) program in December 2020. This ensured that bus carriers could continue providing crucial commuter services and protected the jobs of thousands of workers. Congress also provided significant funding to state public transit agencies, including New Jersey Transit, through the CARES Act, American Rescue Plan, and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to maintain reliable service even as ridership collapsed.

While the public health crisis has improved since that legislation was enacted, the pandemic-induced challenges facing the transit sector have continued. With this in mind, I urge you to take all available actions to protect bus and transit access. This should include using available operating funds to ensure that closed commuter routes are filled by NJ Transit buses and trains, increasing the availability of shuttles that transport commuters to local train stations, working with the Amalgamated Transit Union to hire previously-employed workers to meet NJ Transit workforce shortages, including for commuter bus drivers, and providing flexibility in contract negotiations with passenger bus companies operating NJ Transit routes to support their continued operations where applicable.

I greatly appreciate NJ Transit’s work over the past three years to support commuter bus and rail access for millions of New Jerseyans, and look forward to working together now to ensure that key commuter routes remain open and accessible for working families, which will greatly support the long term growth and dynamism of our state.

Sincerely,



Mikie Sherrill
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Co-signed:



Wayne L. Richardson
Commissioner President, Essex County



Carlos M. Pomares
Commissioner Vice President, Essex County



Brendan W. Gill
Commissioner At-Large, Essex County



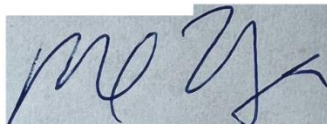
Michael A. Melham
Mayor, Township of Belleville



Stuart K. Patrick
Mayor, Borough of Glen Ridge



Sean M. Spiller
Mayor, Township of Montclair



Michael J. Venezia
Mayor, Township of Bloomfield



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